

NATURAL RESOURCES AND PLANNING HIGHLIGHTS

PROJECT PLANNING HIGHLIGHTS

Calleguas Creek Watershed Management Plan

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is an active participant in Ventura County's Calleguas Creek Watershed Management Plan project. The Calleguas Creek watershed encompasses most of eastern Ventura County including Moorpark, most of Thousand Oaks and Camarillo, Simi Valley, part of the Oxnard Plain, and a small portion of the Santa Susana Mountains in Los Angeles County. Calleguas Creek and its major tributaries, the Arroyo Simi, Arroyo Conejo, and Arroyo Santa Rosa drain the watershed. The headwaters of this watershed start on a portion of Joughin Ranch (Conservancy/MRCA parkland), draining into Las Lajas Creek, and flow in the north-facing slopes of the Simi Hills. The watershed drains into the Pacific Ocean at Mugu Lagoon.

The Calleguas Creek Watershed Management Plan (a Cooperative Strategy for Resource Management and Protection) has been in development by many stakeholders since 1996 to provide a regional and integrated management approach to watershed planning in this important watershed. The project addresses water quality and water supply, flood and sedimentation, agriculture, habitat and recreation, land use, and public outreach and education. The Conservancy is represented on the Steering Committee and on the Habitat and Recreation Subcommittee. The Plan has been funded by annual United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grants and a State Coastal Conservancy grant, among other sources. Work Plans for Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) constituents of concern (salts, metals, historic pesticides, bacteria, and toxicity) were initiated this fiscal year, and are being prepared under the auspices of the Calleguas participants.



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Coastal Zone Offers to Dedicate

Offers to Dedicate public access, trail, or open space easements, or OTDs, are recorded legal documents that are required by the California Coastal Commission to mitigate for a permitted project's impact on public access or the environment. These easements are not enforceable until they are accepted by a government agency or a nonprofit organization. Typically, the term of the offer is 21 years from the date of recording. There are 1,432 recorded OTDs along the California coastline. Of those, 90 are located in the Santa Monica Mountains area. The Conservancy works in partnership with the MRCA and the Coastal Commission to ensure that the OTDs are accepted and their roles as usable accessways, protected open space, and viewsheds are integrated into the overall public park plan for the Santa Monica Mountains.



Tax Defaulted Lands Acquisition Program

In conjunction with the MRCA, the Conservancy considers hundreds of properties offered at public auction for tax delinquency. These properties are acquired through Chapter 8 agreements with the County Treasurer and Tax Collector. These tax defaulted properties are located throughout the Conservancy's jurisdiction from the Upper Santa Clara River Watershed to the far western Santa Monica Mountains. On average, these properties cost less than \$2,000 per acre and could otherwise be lost to development. In fiscal year 2002-2003 this program secured twenty-three properties comprised of 844.39 acres for a total cost of \$583,604.22. The acquisition funding came principally from Proposition 12 grants made by the Conservancy to the MRCA.



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LOS ANGELES RIVER AND URBAN PROJECTS

Activities on the Arroyo Seco

The almost 47 square mile Arroyo Seco watershed ranges from the San Gabriel Mountains in the north, to the Los Angeles River in the south, lying partly within the Angeles National Forest and the communities of Altadena, La Cañada Flintridge, Pasadena, South Pasadena, and Los Angeles. The upper portion of the Arroyo Seco flows naturally down through Hahamongna Watershed Park. The lower portion is channelized, but courses through a long network of parks and open space.

The Conservancy has been working with community leaders to identify opportunities for stream and habitat restoration and open space protection throughout this unique watershed in the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor. Accomplishments in this watershed include Proposition 40 grants to the City of Pasadena for restoration of the Flint Wash Trail bridge, to the City of La Cañada Flintridge to acquire the Hall-Beckley property, and to the Altadena Foothills Conservancy to acquire a portion of the Chaney Trail Corridor abutting the Angeles National Forest. The Conservancy also commissioned a study of open space acquisition opportunities in Montecito Heights from the nonprofit organization People for Parks.

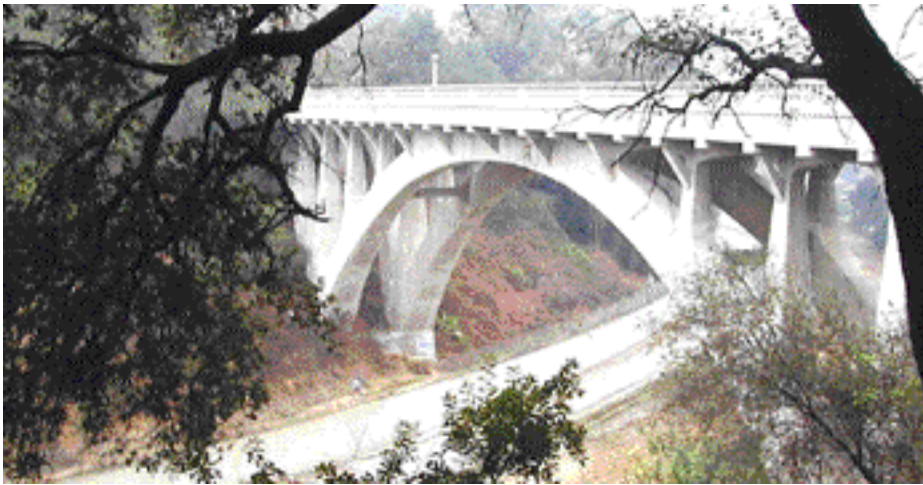


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Arroyo Seco Parkway Scenic Corridor Management Plan

The Arroyo Seco Parkway, also known as the 110 or Pasadena Freeway, was designated a National Scenic Byway in 2002. The Conservancy is working with the California Department of Transportation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Highland Park Heritage Trust to identify ways to restore and improve the parkway and the surrounding corridor lands.



Resources Agency Summit on the Los Angeles River

The Conservancy and the Resources Agency convened a summit meeting at the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens to provide technical assistance to Los Angeles City and County elected officials and administrators to identify and develop Los Angeles River greening and revitalization project proposals for State grant programs.

The result of the summit was the creation of a unified approach toward Los Angeles River projects from the many levels of government involved. Attendees included the State of California Wildlife Conservation Board, State Coastal Conservancy, California Department of Water Resources, and the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Local governments were represented by members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the Los Angeles City Council.



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Los Angeles River – Harvard University Design Studio

The Conservancy sponsored a semester-long studio at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design to promote innovative visions for the future of the Los Angeles River. About a dozen graduate students met with local leaders to learn about the river and to develop focused design alternatives for connecting the future state park at the Cornfields, the planned Confluence Park along the Los Angeles River at the Arroyo Seco, and the future state park at Taylor Yard. The students presented their final projects in Los Angeles in June 2003. The results of the student work will be compiled into a briefing book that will be distributed to decision-makers in the region.

Tujunga Wash Restoration

In the San Fernando Valley the Conservancy is partnering with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, and the Valley Glen Community Council to create natural stream and recreational opportunities on the banks of the channelized Tujunga Wash. The project goal is to provide a demonstration of stream restoration opportunities in an urban area. The project plan is to divert water from the wash and transport it up and out of the wash to create a new mile-long meandering stream with native riparian habitat on the western bank, landscape the eastern bank with native plants, and construct a recreational bike trail and educational displays.



Compton Creek

The Conservancy is working with the Compton Creek Task Force and the City of Compton to identify restoration opportunities along Compton Creek in an area of Los Angeles that is largely devoid of park space. Planned improvements include native riparian landscaping, habitat restoration, and construction of an outdoor amphitheater. With the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, the MRCA will construct two miles of bike path that will connect the City of Compton's trails, which are currently isolated, with Los Angeles County's extensive trail system on the Los Angeles River.

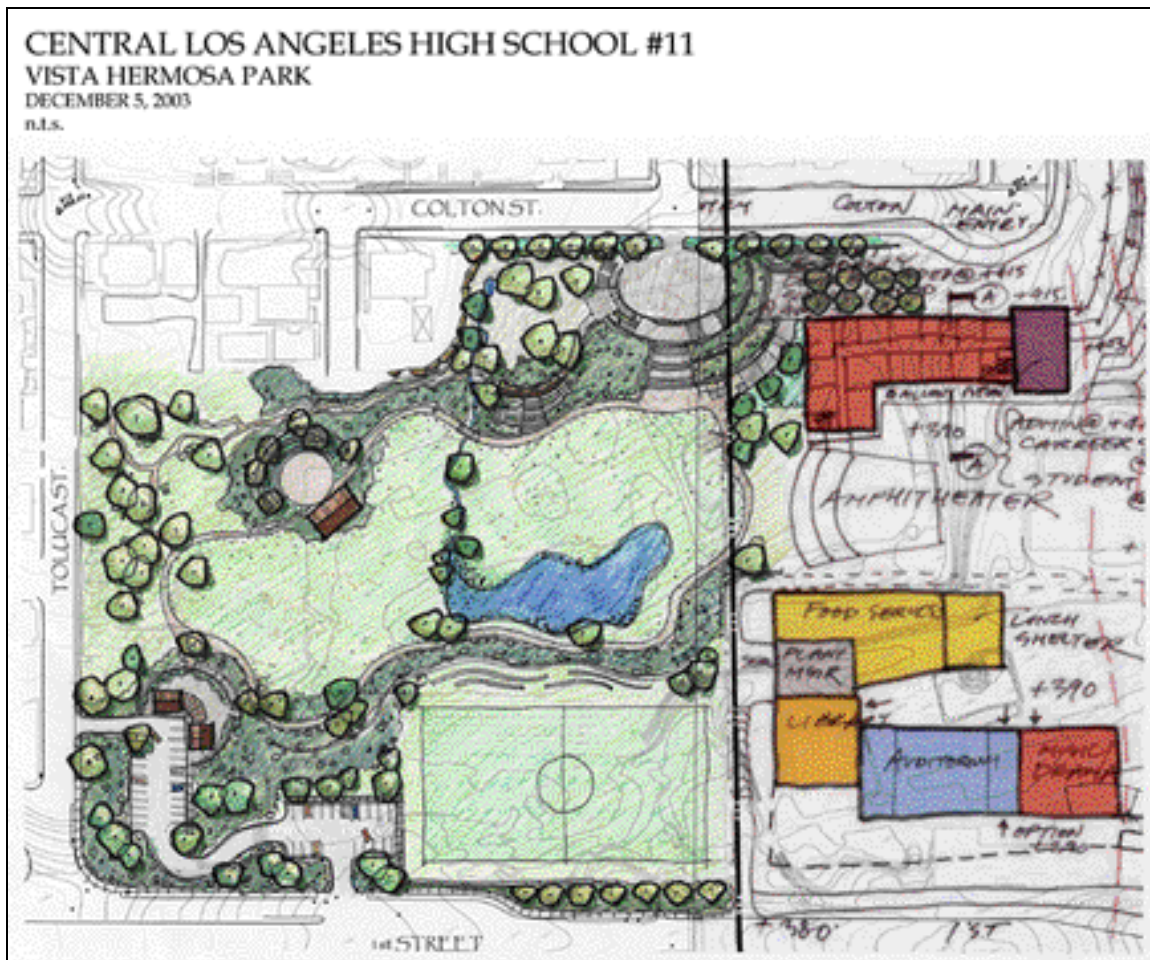
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Vista Hermosa Natural Park

In May of 2003, the Conservancy was approached by Los Angeles Unified School District Board President José Huizar and Los Angeles City Councilmember Ed Reyes to build on the Conservancy's success in its creation of the Augustus F. Hawkins Natural Park in South Los Angeles by developing a new natural urban park. The new park will be adjacent to a new high school on the site of the Belmont Learning Center in downtown Los Angeles. The LAUSD Board subsequently voted to work with the Conservancy to proceed with the project.

Providing a natural watershed experience in the center of the densely populated Temple/Beaudry Union District, the proposed 10 to 12-acre Vista Hermosa Park will feature trails, natural water features, chaparral, fishing ponds, soccer field, picnic areas, and an environmentally-themed children's play area. MRCA will fund, construct, operate, and maintain the park under a lease and joint use agreement with LAUSD. The park will be open for public use by the community. In addition, Central Los Angeles Area New High School #11 and other schools in the area will use the park for a variety of educational and interpretive programs.



NATURAL RESOURCES AND PLANNING HIGHLIGHTS

MITIGATION AND RESTORATION PROJECTS

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has been a responsible steward of the lands it has owned or operated for over twenty years. Part of the Conservancy's expertise includes land improvement and habitat enhancement. Currently the Conservancy participates in "In-Lieu Fee" programs with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), in which mitigation is required from third parties to offset impacts to riparian habitat. This In-Lieu Fee Riparian Restoration Program is administered by the MRCA. All projects are mutually agreed to, before commencement, by all parties.

Fees for mitigation projects range from \$85,000 to \$115,000 per acre, depending on the conditions of the required mitigation. The fees are spent to restore riparian areas on Conservancy or MRCA owned or controlled land, including removing debris and non-native plant materials, and planting native species such as oaks and walnuts and related understory. A portion of the mitigation fees may be used to acquire property appropriate for future riparian creation, enhancement, restoration and/or preservation, under circumstances where it is determined that "no net loss of habitat" will result. Prospective riparian properties in the Coastal Santa Monica Mountains have been identified for purchase with a portion of these funds.

Restoration Project Name/ Related Agencies	Tributary/Park Unit	Riparian Acres Restored	In-Lieu Fees
1. Burns Pacific Mitigation U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Las Virgenes Creek Baldwin Open Space	0.25 (Completed)	\$25,000
2. Liberty Canyon California Dept. of Fish & Game	Las Virgenes Creek Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor	0.25 (Completed)	\$24,000
3. Mureau Estates California Dept. of Fish & Game	Las Virgenes Creek Baldwin Open Space	0.67	\$30,000
4. Richland Phase 1 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Las Virgenes Creek Baldwin Open Space	0.25 (Completed)	\$18,750
5. Richland Phase 2 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Las Virgenes Creek Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor	0.25	\$18,750
6. Richland Phase 3 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Las Virgenes Creek Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor	0.25	\$18,750
7. Richland Phase 4 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Las Virgenes Creek Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor	0.25	\$18,750
8. Richland Phase 5 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Coastal Santa Monica Mountains	2.5 100% land acquisition	\$250,000

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Restoration Project Name/ Related Agencies	Tributary/Park Unit	Riparian Acres Restored	In-Lieu Fees
9. Corral Canyon Mitigation California Dept. of Fish & Game	Corral Canyon Creek Corral Canyon Park	0.35	\$35,000
10. Southlands Church International California Dept. of Fish & Game	Topanga Creek Summit Valley Ed Edelman Park	2.10 50% land acquisition	\$178,500
11. CB Richard Ellis/Carpenter's Pension Trust/Catellus U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Caballero Creek Summit Valley Ed Edelman Park	0.37	\$37,000
12. Palo Verdes Estates California Dept. of Fish & Game	Corral Canyon Creek Corral Canyon Park	0.015	\$1,725
13. Golden Valley/Lauren Development California Dept. of Fish & Game U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Pico Creek Mentryville	0.132	\$13,200
14. Linda Kies (individual) California Dept. of Fish & Game U.S. Army Corps of Engineer	Summit Valley Ed Edelman Park Topanga Creek	0.07 75% land acquisition	\$5,950
15. Shea Homes California Dept. of Fish & Game	Malibu Creek	1.00 75% land acquisition	\$100,000

Liberty Canyon

The MRCA's most successful restoration projects to date lie within the Liberty Canyon inter-mountain range wildlife movement corridor. This corridor is the most critical land connection between the Simi Hills and the Santa Monica Mountains across the Ventura (101) Freeway. The sections of the corridor adjacent to the freeway are narrow and highly disturbed. The MRCA's restoration efforts have focused on maximizing forest and understory vegetation cover in the drainage courses that wind through this chokepoint for wildlife movement. Areas being restored include four separate quarter acre riparian habitats. Each project is designed to optimize the function of the wildlife corridor and to provide resources for resident species. In the first of these projects, hundreds of cubic yards of fill dirt were dredged from a deeply incised creek channel to create thousands of square feet of moist stream channel habitat. This project exceeded its five-year success requirements last year and has been accepted by the California Department of Fish and Game.

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Bosque del Rio Hondo

The MRCA is involved in two riparian restoration projects on small tributaries of the Rio Hondo located immediately south of the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area. Both restoration sites directly benefit the MRCA-managed Bosque del Rio Hondo Natural Area and the wildlife that occupy this unique urban natural area. These two projects have turned a disturbed, weed-choked flood plain into established riparian woodland with native cottonwood, sycamore, oak, elderberry and walnut trees underlain by native roses, monkey flower and blackberry.



Summit Valley Edmund D. Edelman Park

Located in Topanga Canyon, Summit Valley Edmund D. Edelman Park totals 662 acres and contains the headwaters to Topanga Creek. The MRCA is involved in a riparian restoration of approximately 1.10 acres in the park. This project involves corrective grading, dredging thousands of cubic yards of debris that has been dumped at the edge of Topanga Creek, and uncovering an unnamed tributary to the creek that was buried during a landslide. The corrective grading will return the creek to a more natural configuration, allowing for increased recharge of groundwater to support native plants and wildlife. Once the earthwork is completed, restoration will include planting hundreds of native oaks, walnuts, willows, shrubs and ground cover. The restoration site is easily accessible to the public. Project plans include providing an opportunity for local residents to learn about habitat restoration and to participate in removing invasive plant species.

